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DA Raps 2-Year Term; To Re-Arrest Hijacker

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Rejecting a sentence imposed upon a airplane hijacker by a federal court as too lenient, Philadelphia Dist. Atty. Arlen Specter issued his own arrest warrant yesterday.

"If we're really going to have an effect on these aircraft hijackings we're going to have to be tough," Specter said.

Specter's warrant is for the arrest of Thomas George Washington, who boarded an Eastern Airlines plane at the Philadelphia International Airport in December, 1968, and forced the pilot to take it to Cuba.

Washington allegedly abducted his 4-year-old daughter from his divorced wife, boarded the plane with a gun and what he claimed to be nitroglycerine, and made the crew fly to Havana. The daughter was returned to her mother later. Washington returned to the United States last year and surrendered.

On June 4, Washington was given a two-year sentence for interfering with the crew of an airliner by U.S. District Judge Joe Eaton in Miami. Eaton said Washington already had served eight months, or about a third of his sentence, making him eligible for parole, which the jurist recommended.

Specter said he obtained the warrant for arrest on charges of burglary of an aircraft and larceny on learning that Washington may soon be paroled. Specter said his office viewed the federal sentence as too lenient. If convicted on the state charges, Washington could be sentenced to 20 years in prison.

Specter said his office has jurisdiction because Washington boarded the plane in Philadelphia with the intention of taking his daughter away and of hijacking the craft, which carried 141 passengers.

Federal charges of aircraft piracy and kidnaping were dropped prior to Washington's trial.